

Monthly JET Newsletter July 2006



jobs education & training
increasing economic opportunity and reducing
poverty through jobs, education, and training

Notes from the Field:

☞ Each month this space will be devoted to describing how local offices are turning policy into practice.

Experiences from Kent County

In the JET pilot, DHS policy has significantly

changed regarding the **definition, duration, and scope of allowable education and training activities:**

- The requirement that a participant test the labor market before entering in education or training *has been removed*;
- Pilots are allowed to *expand and/or eliminate* strict time limits on education and training activities;
- The *range of allowable activities is broad*, including basic literacy, career/technical, on-the-job, and post-secondary education and basic skill development within degree course curricula.

"Initially, most customers are really excited about the GED program. Many are delighted they can pursue the GED without the complication of working."

Through the implementation of these policy changes, the Kent County JET pilot site has experienced a huge spike in secondary education participants. Specifically, clients who test below the 8th grade reading level in assessment are enrolled in a variety of secondary education options, such as basic skills, ESL, or GED completion classes. Further, the requirement to work at least 10 hours a week while enrolled in secondary education has been removed, allowing clients to fully focus on their educational activities. States Jody Haagsma, MWA Program Manager, "Initially some caseworkers got some resistance from clients about the education assignment because the clients may have had a bad experience in school. However, once they see how the classes are customized to them and they can go at their own pace, the participants really start to value this change in assignment."

In the four-month period since JET started, the local MWA has enrolled 105 participants in GED classes, 38 people have taken their GED test, and 3 achieved their GED. 80 participants are still active in the GED classes. Another 23 participants enrolled during this period in Education Directly Related to Employment for ESL and/or basic skills training. Compare these figures to the previous enrollment of 17 people in GED and 35 enrolled in education related to employment prior to JET.

Says Jody Haagsma, MWA Program Manager, "The rate of completing assignments and testing has accelerated with the JET program. Students are taking GED tests earlier and more frequently. This is encouraging for the students because early positive feedback builds momentum."

JET PILOTS ROLLOUT

JUNE

- ★ JET readiness survey is completed by FIP applicants
- ★ MWA/JET referral after FIP openings on CIMS

JULY

- ★ 90-day sanction piloted
- ★ Link to other initiatives (Homelessness, Ruby Payne, Fatherhood)
- ★ Accomplish, where agreed to locally, co-location of FIS/JET staff

Note: The Automated Screening Tool (FAST) will be online in August. In the interim, clients in non-compliance must be given an opportunity to complete a hard copy version of FAST (DHS-595) before or during the triage session to evaluate the family situation before determining if a 3-month penalty applies. Staff must review the FAST and screen for potential barriers before the negative action is applied.

AUGUST

- ★ *Training on FAST/FSSP delivered locally to JET sites 1st week of August*
- ★ Family Automated Screening Tool (FAST) is piloted (Automatic notice sent to clients at FIP case opening)
- ★ Family Self Sufficiency Plan (FSSP) required of mandatory as well as deferred FIP applicants/recipients. Non-compliance with FSSP sanctioned the same as non-compliance with work.

SEPTEMBER

- ★ *Training on federal TANF work participation changes via e-learning environment*

OCTOBER

- ★ Increase earned income disregard

Sanilac Kick-Off Event Draws Crowds

"We've got a real sense of camaraderie," affirms Marvin Pichla of the Thumb area DHS, MRS and MWA partners involved in JET. All three agencies, along with DLEG Director Swanson and State Representative Espinoza, turned out to formally kick off JET and to welcome the Thumb Area Michigan Works! Employment Training Consortium into their new office space. Mr. Pichla, Director of the Thumb Area Michigan Works! office, says of JET "We're trying to do it a better way."

- Wayne County: July 21, 1:00 - 2:00 pm
- Oakland County: August 11, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm
- Kent County: August 18, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

☞ Visit the JET website at www.michigan.gov/jet for all the latest information

